

Things to remember about cover letters...

A cover letter can sometimes be even more important than the résumé. It will actually “sell” the reader on the idea of reading your résumé so they will want to contact you for an interview. A cover letter should always accompany a résumé and should always be individualized to the employer you are sending it to.

An effective cover letter:

- Is tailored to a specific position in a specific organization (matches your qualifications with the requirements of the job).
- Shows why the employer should read your résumé.
- Demonstrates your knowledge of the hiring organization and the job.
- States how you heard about the opening, whether through a person, job listing, ad, etc.
- Is straightforward, businesslike, and positive.
- Is typed neatly, error free and on good quality paper.
- Is usually no more than one page.
- Is addressed to a specific person. Avoid using “Dear Sir” or “To Whom It May Concern.” If you are unsure to whom it is addressed, use “Dear Hiring Manager,” “Dear Manager,” “Dear Human Resources Manager,” or “Dear Recruiter.”

Cover letters can be used to inquire about job openings or apply for known vacancies. They should always be specifically tailored to respond to a particular company and/or job vacancy. This means you will need to create a different cover letter for each job you seek. To personalize your letters, research information about the business and obtain the name of the person to whom you are writing.

Cover letters should usually consist of three to five paragraphs, as outlined below.

The Opening - State the position you are applying for and how you learned of the job. Choose two or three key attributes that you possess related to the position to peak the interest of the employer to want to read your letter.

The Body 1-2 paragraphs - Highlight your main qualifications, the skills and experiences that relate to the job (refer to, but don't repeat your résumé).

The Closing and Thank you – Offer to meet with the employer at a mutually convenient time to discuss your qualifications and provide your contact information. Thank the employer for considering you for the position. Most employers do not want to be contacted by potential employees unsolicited so stating you will be calling to follow up is not recommended, nor is boldly assuming that contacting them will facilitate an interview. These tactics are risky and may result in turning off a potential employer.

HERE IS A SAMPLE COVER LETTER TO HELP GUIDE YOU:

May 5, 2010

Current date

Jasper T. Simmons
1289 Western Boulevard
Jacksonville, NC 28546

Your return address

Alexander M. Smith
Human Resources Manager
Telluride Corporation
88 Federal Way
Tacoma, WA 98597

Employer's address

Dear Mr. Smith:

Salutation written to a specific person is preferred; if you do not know who the recipient is, use Dear Hiring Manager, Search Committee, or Recruiter...To Whom It May Concern is a last resort.

I am writing in interest of applying for the position of Loan Processing Assistant advertised with Telluride Corporation with your Jacksonville subsidiary. My background includes five years of financial assisting and contract processing with my family's business, in addition to having earned an Associate in Science Degree in Finance and Marketing from Coastal Carolina Community College.

P1-purpose of your letter

During the pursuit of my Associate in Financial Services Degree, I worked part-time as an inventory clerk with Wal-Mart Stores, Incorporated. My duties included assisting customers, processing inventory, and ensuring that bar codes were accurately entered into the store computer system. I was responsible for reconciling inventory discrepancies for products, damages, and returns to vendors. The position required a great deal of attention to detail through processing of invoices and documents to ensure that the store received proper credit for returns. Additionally, my experience includes five years of financial budgeting, accounts receivable, and customer service experience with my family's lawn care business. I have worked extensively with a variety of financial planning and accounting software packages including QuickBooks and Peachtree.

P2-focus on your skills as they relate to the position you are applying for

I am confident that my background and skills, coupled with my eagerness to enter the finance industry, would make me a great asset to your team. I am a punctual, cooperative, and energetic person who enjoys working in a fast-paced environment. It would be my pleasure to arrange a convenient time to discuss my qualifications for this position with you. I may be reached at (910) 123-4567 or by email at simmonsjt@yahoo.com.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to speaking with you further regarding the Loan Processing position.

P4-thank the employer for consideration

Respectfully,

P3-Summarize your qualifications and provide contact info in your request for an interview

Jasper T. Simmons

P5-Closing with signature

ENC: Résumé
Quickbooks Certification
Application

Enclosures: use when mailing or faxing documents to ensure items are not separated.